merits and many advantages. The illustrations, which are generally good, demonstrate the excellent preservation of morphological detail and other characteristics of smears in a comprehensive range of tumours and other types of lesion encountered in a neurosurgical practice. Incorporated in the introductory chapter there is an excellent two-page tabulation of tumours of the central nervous system, based on the current W.H.O. classification.

Early chapters describe the technique, emphasizing its simplicity and describe smear preparations of normal brain and of typical reactive changes. Resembling an atlas, the major part of the volume is devoted to illustrations (in black and white) with commendably short descriptive paragraphs. Six of the fourteen chapters are arranged systematically in the order of the classification provided and are devoted to tumours. Lesions compressing the spinal cord are dealt with in one chapter and lesions other than tumours—encephalitis, cerebral infarction and lesions in bone—in another.

One hopes that the prospective user of this book will not be discouraged by the authors' evident aim to include almost every lesion that may be encountered in a neurosurgeon's career, but will concentrate on the chapters which deal with the most common entities.

The simplicity of the smear technique has been emphasized but many pitfalls in the interpretation of the preparations may be encountered even by an experienced neuropathologist and the trainee will be well advised to give early attention to Chapter 14 which is entitled 'Diagnostic Problems'. In this chapter valuable information and guidance in handling these problems is provided.

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Clinical Aspects of Renal Physiology

By G. R. D. CATTO and J. A. R. SMITH. Pp. 147, illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, 1981. £7.50.

During the last few years there has been a steady output of middle of the road nephrology books, reflecting the greater interest in this speciality than has even been manifested before. This is a healthy sign and, obviously, writing books of this sort is something to be encouraged.

I was therefore interested to see a book on Clinical Aspects of Renal Physiology, and I think the authors have managed successfully to combine clinical advice on a background of physiological information. The problem in this sort of exercise is, of course, that if physiology is presented in the same sort of detail as is common in nephrology journals, virtually nobody would read the book, but I do feel that the authors have, perhaps, gone too far in the opposite direction as, for example, persistently referring to salt when what is meant is sodium.

The book is too short to be of much value to Membership students, but I would recommend it to medical students as being easily readable and readily understood. The diagrams are plain, but I was not particularly impressed by the quality of the photographs, and I was disappointed by the rather superficial treatment of important new ideas like natriuretic hormone.

However, these reservations will not, I am sure, detract from its value at the level of the final year student or house staff, as an introduction to the fascinating and intricate mystery of renal physiology.

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An Introduction to Paediatric Neurology

By GWILYM HOSKING. Pp. 352, illustrated. Faber and Faber, London, 1982. £11.50 (cased) £5.95 (paperback).

This compact paperback volume is aimed primarily at nurses and professions supplementary to medicine, social workers, teachers of handicapped children and others involved in their care. It is concise

and readable and covers most of the important neurological disorders in childhood. It also has a useful chapter of line drawings of anatomical structure of the nervous system and a further chapter of illustrations of the common as well as more specialized procedures in neurological investigation. The descriptions on the whole are clear, concise and comprehensible and dogmatic enough to give an air of authority. In a few places more basic description might be helpful—for example in the section on ataxia Dr Hosking wades in directly to a discussion of the various mechanisms and causes, without giving a clear description of what ataxia really is or looks like. Each chapter has a useful short list of recommended further reading and at the end there are also some general texts for reference and a very useful list of charitable and other organizations that may be of help in relation to the management of individual disorders. The role of the parent in the management of children with handicaps is also outlined. This book could also provide a useful base-line in paediatric neurology for the undergraduate medical student, but will probably not have sufficient depth to interest the postgraduate.

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MCQs in Paediatrics

By W. S. UTTLEY. Pp. xii + 168. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1982. £3.95.

The reviewer must confess that his first encounter with the multiple choice question some years ago produced a rather unfavourable reaction—a mixture of scepticism and hostility towards its contradictory mixture of dogmatism and imprecision. This first reaction has slowly changed, mainly as a result of increasing experiences of MCQs as an examiner for the DCH and of composing them for the examination and various publications. There is no doubt also that the standard of MCQs is rising all the time, and has now reached the position where the MCQ mark tallies very well with the marks awarded by examiners in an essay paper in the same examination. Although not yet universally beloved of candidates, there are many reasons for their popularity with examiners. They do not allow of verbosity, they eliminate the horror of indecipherable handwriting and they greatly reduce (though they do not abolish) the disadvantage of sketchy knowledge of the language. Above all, they save a huge amount of time—they can be marked by a computer.

This small book is based on Forfar's excellent *Textbook of Paediatrics*, and the author has clearly set out to acquaint prospective examinees with the format of these questions and his answers to them. In a useful preamble, he discusses the construction of different types of MCQ, the qualities needed by an ideal question, how to answer them and how to analyse their success in terms of ease of answering, discrimination between the good and bad examinee, and correlation with the rest of the examination. This is a very valuable section and should not be missed either by candidates or examiners. The lay-out is convenient with the answers on the reverse side of every page, making it very easy to cross-check. The answers are accompanied by short and pertinent comments on the topic justifying the 'true' or 'false' label.

As far as the questions themselves are concerned, they range from the commonplace to the highly esoteric, and the reviewer must express a personal dislike for a key which consists of a long paragraph, almost a clinical history. This seems to be a departure from the true nature of the genuine MCQ—pithy and to the point—and seems to offer opportunities for clouding the issue. It would also hardly be expected that the reviewer would agree with every answer and with every comment on the reverse page. But these are minor quibbles and do not amount to a significant criticism of this book. The author does not say whether he personally composed every question in the book. If he did, and knowing the labour involved in formulating them, he is to be congratulated indeed.

Any prospective candidate who works through this book without

cheating will find himself much better equipped for the MRCP and DCH and is strongly recommended to do so.

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Membrane Physiology of Invertebrates

Edited by R. B. PODESTA. Pp. x + 664, illustrated. Marcel Dekker, New York and Basel, 1982. Sw.Fr. 238.00.

This informative and useful volume performs two functions for membrane physiology. Firstly, it demonstrates the value of invertebrate organisms for research on membranes and secondly, it provides a detailed survey of the work done so far on invertebrates in this subject.

A historical review forms a useful introduction to the use of invertebrate tissues, which often prove more suitable for study than vertebrate material. Early appreciation of their value included J. Z. Young's realization of the advantages of the squid giant axon for studies on nerves. Since then, as the editor says in his preface, 'invertebrates have been and continue to be animals of choice for studying problems associated with the function of biological membranes'.

The following chapters by various authors cover work on membranes in all the major invertebrate groups. The importance of membrane functioning to most aspects of cell physiology is clear, especially when membranes are acting as barriers between fluid spaces in and between cells. Both excitable and non-excitable cells have been investigated, in attempts to discover the mechanisms of excitability and of ion and non-electrolyte transport. Some topics, such as water and solute transport in the crustacean gut, have received a considerable amount of attention in recent years. Some chapters, however, reveal the scarcity of research undertaken in groups such as echinoderms and annelids. In fact, all groups offer much more scope for study of membranes. Hence, a third function may be ascribed to this book, namely, that of stimulating further work in this important and interesting field.

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Modulation of Autoimmunity and Disease. The Penicillamine Experience

Edited by R. N. MAINI and H. BERRY. *Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutic Series* Volume 1. Pp. 310. Praeger, Eastbourne, Sussex and New York, 1981. £12.00.

Penicillamine was introduced by Jaffe because of its ability to break sulphhydryl bonds thereby offering the hope that it might be effective in treating rheumatoid vasculitis. From this selective beginning, the study of penicillamine has become a research endeavour in its own right, attracting the attention of both laboratory and clinical investigators. Moreover, the beneficial effects of this drug in uncomplicated rheumatoid arthritis hold promise of throwing light on the nature of the disease itself. The results of these studies have been gathered together in these published proceedings of a conference on penicillamine held under the auspices of Dista in October, 1980. The Editors have compiled an impressive array of contributions dealing with every aspect of penicillamine research. In the clinical context there are chapters on clinical experience with this drug in adults and children. Some of these contributions are anecdotal and others are full analytical reports. These papers also discuss dosage schedules, hypersensitivity reactions, and laboratory monitoring. The more basic scientific papers cover a wide range of topics including the effects of penicillamine on laboratory models of

autoimmune disease and changes in the serological features of human rheumatoid disease such as circulating immune complexes and rheumatoid factor titres.

As with most published Conference Proceedings, there is no uniformity in the format of the presentations. Some authors provide comprehensive reviews of a problem as, for example, the discussion of pharmacokinetics by Van DerKorst and colleagues; similarly Golding and his colleagues provide a comprehensible account of their experience with low dose penicillamine in rheumatoid arthritis over a period of 7 years. Inevitably, not all the contributions reach the high standards of these and many other papers clearly represent the hurried accumulation of miscellaneous thoughts and fragmentary data needed to reach the Editor's dead-line. Many such contributions introduce more problems than they solve. Does the contributor who wrote that 'if and when D-typing becomes more generally available it would seem reasonable to tissue-type patients before commencing treatment' really believe that this is already something which should be introduced into routine immunological practice? Again, this volume is not free from a common defect in published Conference Proceedings whereby authors make statements which they would not contemplate if these were to be subjected to rigorous editorial scrutiny; the sparse data presented by Dequeker and his colleagues certainly does not justify the unqualified statement that 'D-Penicillamine daily can at least stabilize the deterioration of lung diffusion capacity in progressive systemic sclerosis...' (page 289).

This book is recommended to research workers in both clinical and laboratory medicine who need a detailed review of the current status of penicillamine research with the intellectual untidiness unavoidable in any debate on an unsolved scientific problem. The book is insufficiently didactic to suit the needs of most rheumatologists, other clinicians, or scientists with more general interests. The book is well produced and remarkably cheap by today's standards.

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Treat Obesity Seriously. A Clinical Manual

By J. S. GARROW. Pp. 246, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne and New York, 1981. £10.00.

The day before I wrote this review I went to the hospital dietetic department to discuss a weight problem (a patient's!) and found the dietician on duty taking a breather with *Treat Obesity Seriously*. She had got the message—this is an excellent book. Dr Garrow has written it out of his experience of 2,000 or so patients seen at Northwick Park Hospital and intends it to be a clinical manual for those dealing with obesity in general and hospital practice. He classifies obesity into three grades of severity based on the weight/height² index of Quetelet. The evidence that obesity of all three grades is harmful is presented together with the admittedly slimmer body of evidence that weight reduction reduces the risks.

The physiological basis of obesity and its management is provided but the major part of the book is concerned with the practical management of obesity. This is considered in detail for each of the three grades of severity of obesity, and this seems to make good sense. There are separate and very useful chapters on the management of obesity in pregnancy and in childhood. Dr Garrow's style is personal and lively but his enthusiasm for his subject is tempered by a balanced attitude to the realities of treating obesity, as befits an old campaigner.

Treat Obesity Seriously should be read by all concerned with treating obesity. There is no better book on the subject.

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